Narrative and Its Media:  
Story Logic in Spoken and Written Discourse

This paper explores relations between narrative and its media, focusing on commonalities and differences between stories presented in spoken and written discourse. Drawing on Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* as well as a story about “shapeshifting” that was told during a sociolinguistic interview, the paper sketches a model for describing and explaining the story logic of literary versus conversational narratives. On the one hand, stories *have* a logic that consists of a number of design principles. These principles afford ways of coding circumstances, participants, states, actions, and events in “storyworlds,” i.e., the global mental representations that interpreters are prompted to create as they read or listen to a narrative. On the other hand, narrative also *constitutes* a logic in its own right, providing human beings with one of their primary resources for comprehending experience and organizing interaction. The paper uses this dual profile of story logic to compare and contrast the transformations of Gregor Samsa and the shapeshifter. Although both stories recruit from a common stock of narrative design principles, the constraints of written versus spoken discourse necessitate that Kafka and the storyteller exploit those principles in different, media-specific ways.